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FRENCH HOUSE FURNISHING.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

THE BATH-ROOM AND THE DRESSING-ROOM.

THERE is a prevalent opinion amongst Anglo-Saxons that the French are not a bathing people. This statement requires very considerable qualification. In the year of grace 1644, the author of the *Lois de la Galanterie Française* wrote as follows: "To speak first of that which concerns the person, you may go sometimes to the bathers to have the body cleaned, and every day you will take



WATER URN FOR TOILET, STYLE LOUIS XVI.

the trouble to wash your hands with almond bread; you must also wash your face almost as often." Such were the recommendations it was thought useful to make to the fair ladies of the Renaissance. So, too, Henri IV., of amorous memory, never even rinsed his mouth out from the day of his birth to the day of his death. Louis XIV, when he rose in the morning, contented himself with cleaning his nails and rubbing his eyes with alcohol. Marguerite of Valois rarely washed her hands more than once a week. In the XVIII. century, on the contrary, baths—warm baths—were much in vogue and were taken, if not with the minute care of the ancient Romans, at least with a refinement and a touch of parade very natural in that age of luxury. Still, owing not a little to the use of powder and the impossibility of unpowdering and repowdering their hair every day, we are obliged to reconcile ourselves to the thought that the ladies who figure in the delicious pictures of Lancret, Baudoin and Lawrence did not smell sweet. In reality, baths in the XVIII. century were considered as a luxury and a pleasure rather than as a means of cleanliness. It is only in the present century, together with horse-racing, betting, lawn tennis, athleticism and other phenomena of Anglomania that baths, douches, tubing and purificatory ablutions have come to be regarded not only as necessary to health, but as the duty of every gentleman. Still even now the maxim that cleanliness is next to godliness, is only put into practice by the upper ten thousand and by the inhabitants of the large towns; the peasants, even when they live on the banks of a river, never think of bathing, and the southern French consider that the natural sudation to which they are predisposed takes entirely the place of baths, either warm or cold. But in point of fact, at the present moment, there is perhaps no city in Europe better provided with bath

houses than Paris. In almost every street you will find an *établissement des bains* composed of a multitude of little cabinets, each containing a bath. In Paris it is the custom for people to go to the bath house or to have a bath brought up to their flat from the bath house, each bath house keeping portable baths for the purpose and cisterns on wheels, drawn by hand or horse-power, to convey the hot water, which is carried up stairs in buckets in very primitive style. Such being the custom of the country, we must not look for bath rooms in the ordinary French tenement houses; we shall only find them in the private hotels of the wealthy and in large country houses.

Generally, it must be confessed, that modern French bath rooms, like the bath rooms we find in the ordinary English house, contrast very unfavorably with those of bygone ages, and not only with the excessive luxury of the Roman baths, but even with the baths of a hundred years ago. The modern bath room is generally a narrow cabinet without decoration, within one corner a narrow, unornamented bath, the water of which smells only of the leaden pipes through which it has passed. When you get out of the bath there is no couch, no *lit de repos*, no perfume-burner to render the atmosphere grateful to the sensitive nostrils, no *massage*, no shampooing, no frictions, no essences, no refinements

whatever. Getting out of the bath simply means a brusque transition from hot to cold. It is true that we moderns have not, as the ancients had, time to pass half our days in a bath. With us, unfortunately, time is money. This, however, is all the more reason

for rendering as agreeable as possible the short time that we have to pass in a bath room. Here, as in every other nook and corner of our home, let us endeavor to have artistic surroundings on which the eye and the mind may always dwell with pleasure. Such would be the bath room which Edward de Goncourt imagined for his heroine La Faustin, and which was described in this journal last March. Such was the bath room of Trémicour, described in Bastide's *Petite Maison*. Marble, porcelain, muslin—nothing had been spared in Trémicour's bath room. The wainscoting were covered with arabesques, bronzes of caffieri, pagodas, crystal and shells, mingled tastefully with



TOILET ACCESSORIES, STYLE LOUIS XVI.

marine plants, formed the decoration of the room, in which were two recesses, one occupied by a bath and the other by a bed of Indian muslin, embroidered and trimmed with tassels and fringe. By the side of the bath room was a dressing room,

the wainscoting of which was painted by Huet with panels of fruit, flowers and birds, intermingled with garlands and medallions, in which Boucher had painted in *camaieu* little gallant subjects and other similar subjects over the doors. A silver toilet service by Germain was not forgotten, nor vases of blue and gold porcelain filled with fresh flowers. The chairs were gilded wood, upholstered in blue lampas, and the tables and other furniture of "verniss Martin." The ceiling was vaulted gold mosaic, intermingled with painted flowers.

A beautiful and elegant bath-room is in a chateau near Fontainebleau, and constructed from the designs of Francois Blondel, to whom we owe some of the happiest and purest specimens of the Louis XV. style in interior decoration. The style of decoration is simple and severe, and fitted to be carried out in stone or marble. In the case we are describing the room is wainscoted and painted white and gold; the front of the bath is painted white, and the bronze ornaments in relief are gilded; the curtains are of white linen trimmed with gold fringe and a little embroidery; over the door is a painting in *camaieu* in the style of Boucher, which, in case the room were executed in stone or marble, might be advantageously replaced by a bas-relief; on each side of the door is a bracket supporting a vase of precious marble mounted in bronze; the ceiling is adorned with arabesques in gold and a central and corner subject in *camaieu*; the floor is of blue and white marble in a simple diamond pattern. The console table, the centre tables and the minor articles of furniture are very simple Louis XV. pieces, and the chairs and sofas are upholstered in faded blue lampas. This bath room is really a delicious room, of supremely elegant proportions, and, with its view over an old park and with a mass of lilacs, azaleas or other flowering shrubs in one corner, it is perhaps as charming a nook as one could imagine for the purpose. Yet another bath-room worth mentioning was that of



TOILET TABLE, STYLE LOUIS XVI.

la Dervieux, in her time a rival of the celebrated Sophie Arnoue. La Dervieux in her riper years married the architect Belanger, and had a very beautiful house in the Rue Chantereine, now Rue de la Victoire. The bath-room was octagonal in form and preceded by a large antechamber provided with couches, chairs, etc., all in the style of the Directory—that is to say, semi-Pompeian. In an old and rare colored plate representing the "Salle des bains dans l'hôtel de la Citoyenne Dervieux," the octagon bath-room is represented with its white marble floor, in the centre of which is a circular fountain basin, and immediately over the fountain a glass cupola. One bay of the octagon is occupied by a casement window, one by the doorway, two by recesses, in which are placed divans, and the other four by panels painted with subjects in the Pompeian style. The ground of the decoration is blue for the panels and white for the recesses, and the subjects are polychrome. The divans are draped in white linen embroidered with rose. The bath is of antique bronze with Pompeian ornaments, and is placed opposite the window which looks into a garden.

In a house in the Place Vendôme, erected about 1790, I have seen a very handsome bath-

cabinet de toilette or dressing-room. It is no longer the custom as it was in the last century for ladies to arrange their toilet in public, in the presence of a promiscuous crowd of wits and gossips of both sexes. Our modern ladies have adopted the advice of Ovid, Balzac and Madame de Genlis, who all agree on this point, that a woman should never

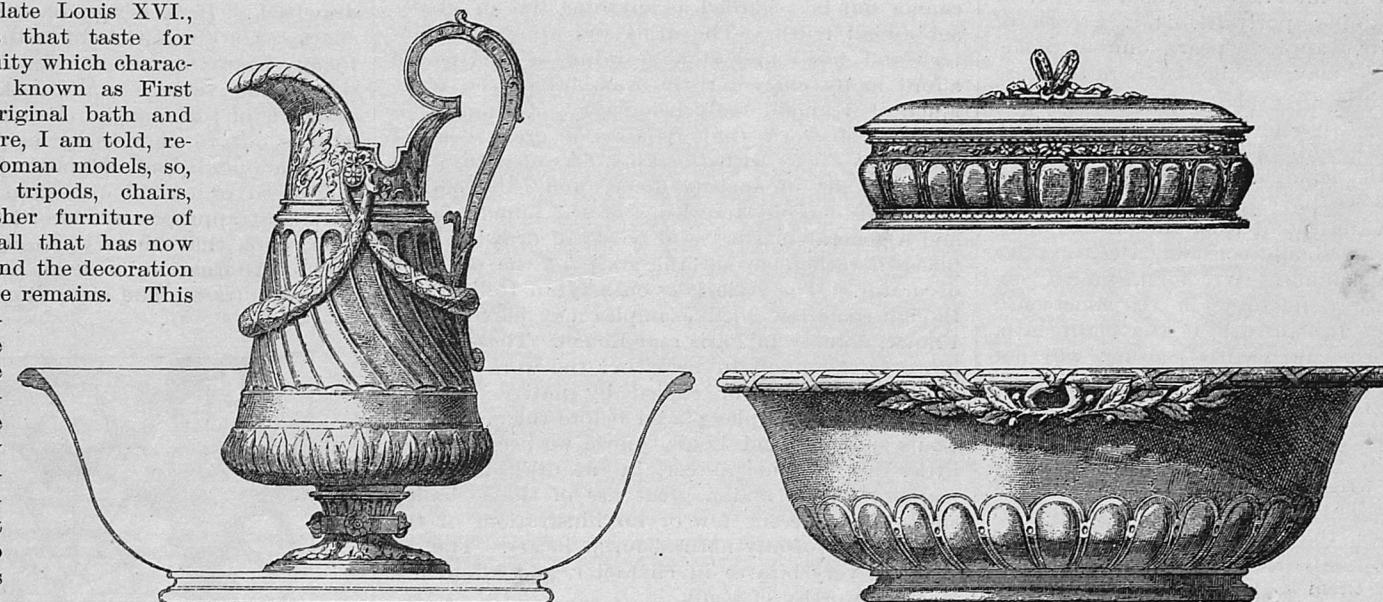
you may use your dressing-room without the fear of catching cold. Remember that according to French notions—I mean the notions of those French people who have pretensions to the elegance of life, and elegance often means simply reasonableness and cleanliness—the dressing-room is of constant use. All the washing and brushing and combing and dressing and undressing is to be done in it. Therefore, it requires to be well warmed and well lighted night and day; in the day by large windows and at night by numerous girandoles, brackets and *bras* placed on the different walls and especially in the vicinity of the looking-glasses, which ought to be numerous. Indeed, perhaps, it would be a good idea to banish the *armoire à glace* from the bed-room after all, and place it in the dressing-room, as I have seen done in several cases of late, especially if the wardrobe in question be with three faces and with the doors swinging

on swivels, as they are now made so that you can get at once a front, back and three-quarter view of yourself. The floor will be thickly and softly carpeted and the hangings and upholstery must be in gray or neutral tones so as not to interfere with the real color and brilliancy of the toilet. A lady, for instance, who had her dressing-room hung with blue might, by the contrast and reflection of the surrounding colors, find her complexion and dress satisfactory and in harmony while in her dressing-room, and be disagreeably surprised to find, when she arrived in her friend's rose saloon, that her harmony was a failure and that her dress was too accentuated. Their soberness of tone need not, however, imply poverty in the decoration and style of the dressing-room. In the furniture and in

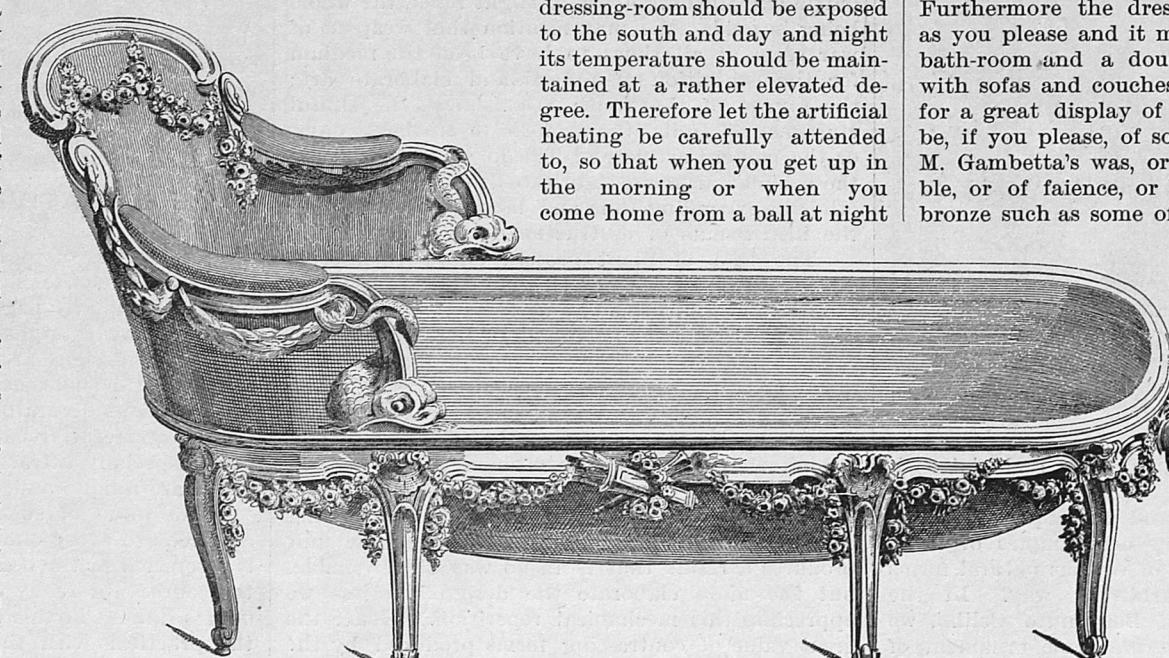
the toilet accessories, silver, porcelain, brushes, jewel cases, chimney ornaments, powder boxes, etc., luxury, art and taste need have no limits. The splendor and beauty of modern toilet accessories defy verbal description; we can only refer the reader to the cuts that he will find from time to time in these pages. Furthermore the dressing-room may be as large as you please and it may even be combined with a bath-room and a douche-room and be furnished with sofas and couches. In this case there is room for a great display of art in the bath which may be, if you please, of solid silver, as the legend said M. Gambetta's was, or it may be of precious marble, or of faience, or better still a master-piece of bronze such as some of the great decorative artists of the last century, like Delafosse, designed and engarlanded with roses. After all the dressing-room may be made as simple or as sumptuous as you please, for as no one is admitted into it, no one can be shocked by the deficiency or excess of luxury; the size and the quantity and form of the furniture in it are subject entirely to the caprice of the occupant.

WATER PITCHER, BASIN AND TOILET BOX, IN SILVER.

show the precious arsenal that enables her to embellish her natural beauty or artfully to conceal her deficient charms. The modern dressing-room, then, is inaccessible, but that is no reason why its arrangement and its decoration should be neglected or left to chance. On the contrary, if possible, the dressing-room should be exposed to the south and day and night its temperature should be maintained at a rather elevated degree. Therefore let the artificial heating be carefully attended to, so that when you get up in the morning or when you come home from a ball at night



BATH TUB, BY DELAFOSSE



Linen draperies are sometimes trimmed with bands of Turkey red and lace insertions.